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Graduate School
Thesis
CHARACTERIZATION IN O.HENRY
by
Harry lee Faggett
Candidate for M. A. Degree
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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

CHARACTERIZATION IN O.HENRY

by

Harry Lee Faggett

(B.S., Hampton Institute, 1934)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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PREFACE

PREFACE

In the works of O.Henry, the technique of characterization is one of the principal features contributing to the phenomenally meteoric rise to success of this "master of the short-story".

It is the purpose of the detailed analysis contained in this work to reveal that a large measure of his peculiar success was due to an originality and a lack of conformity which made the O.Henry technique of characterization unique.

This main purpose is accomplished by an examination of the author's source of material for his characters; through analysis of his method of character delineation in stories representative of his work and through authoritative evaluation of the product of his technique.

Materials used in formulating the conclusions herein presented are the complete works of O.Henry, together with relative biographical, critical, technical, and historical literature.

Indirectly, it is the objective of this literary endeavor to present an analysis which might prove instructive in the art of successful character delineation in narration, particularly in the field of the short-story.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Many large volumes would be required to offer any complete analysis of the development of setting, plot, character, and style in the works of O.Henry. Any attempt to determine which feature in the make-up of his stories is the principal factor contributing to his popularity would be a gigantic--and perhaps an impossible--undertaking. In view of these salient facts, the argument, criticism, evaluations, and conclusions presented in the ensuing analysis are devoted to one particular feature, the technique of characterization in the works of O.Henry. This particularization is further pin-pointed to what may be considered the key-word to successful character delineation in O. Henry. That word is uniqueness. That his characters are unique in derivation and in the O.Henry manner of manipulation accounts in a large measure for the success of his narration. It is an established fact, admittedly by O.Henry himself, as well as by his critics and biographers, that he strove to be different. He did not choose to follow the pattern for blending character, setting, and plot in narration, as set by Poe, Hawthorne, or O'Brein; and purely accidental are the slight traces of similarity to Bret Harte (in "The Snow Man")[1], De Maupassant (in "The Gift of the Magi")[2], or Thomas Bailey Aldrich (in "The

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1. Twelve Stories -- O.Henry
2. The Four Million -- O.Henry

Marquis and Miss Sally")[1]. There is sufficient evidence to prove that O.Henry never cared to read their works; nor was he interested in imitating any of the language masters. St. John Adcock, a well-known British writer says of O.Henry, "He has none of the conscious stylist's little tricks with words, for he is a master of language and not its slave".[2]

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1. Rolling Stones (Note) From this point onward, wherever the name of the author of a volume is omitted, O.Henry is that author.

2. St. J. Adcock, The Complete Works of O.Henry, page 1350

PART ONE

O.Henry's Sources

PART ONE

O.Henry's Sources

Regarding the derivation of his agents of action, the author chose them to be different in two respects, namely, their social rank and their wide range in variety of environment.

The principal characters of all of O.Henry's stories, with but few exceptions, are people of low, or the very lowest state of society. One New York writer remarked that there were only "four hundred" people worth writing about in the city of New York. O.Henry replied with a volume exalting the proletariat, which he titled, The Four Million, relative to the entire population of New York City at that time. This was his way of saying that they all were worth writing about. That he was extremely democratic is emphasized by his choice of characters, as well as by the manner in which he treats them. This phase of short-story development was something comparatively new at the time O.Henry was writing (1900-1910). The shop-girls, poor clerks, hoboes, immigrants, and Negroes are treated with a profound depth of sympathy and understanding. The exceptions where the principal characters are people of a higher social status are: "The Halberdier of the Rheinschloss"[1], "A Ramble in Aphasia"[2], and "Roads of Destiny"[1]. Of a total of two hundred seventy-three stories examined, these are the most noteworthy ex-

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1. Roads of Destiny 2. Strictly Business

ceptions.

O.Henry's canvas was broad. His characters include representations of people whom he had met during his early life spent in North Carolina, and later in Texas, Louisana, Central America, and finally, New York City. The Four Million, Voice of the City, The Trimmed Lamp, Strictly Business, and Twelve Stories contain, principally, his short-stories written about the people of New York City. Heart of the West, Rolling Stones, and a few additional stories from other volumes reflect the influence of the author's Western experiences. The Gentle Grafter volume contains stories told to O.Henry while he was in prison; the background of these stories is very broad indeed, covering sections of Texas, Louisana, Carolina, and the city of New York. Roads of Destiny shows the influence of the author's extensive "dime-novel" experiences of his youth, through some of the stories in this volume. This is a miscellaneous collection as are the volumes titled Options, Sixes and Sevens, and Whirligigs.

The author who abhorred conventionality in selection of subjects for his stories chose one commonplace personality, in particular, to write about. That personality belongs to O.Henry, himself. With no more than the equivalent of a poor grammar school education, with little or no real acquaintance with the great figures of literature, he dared to offer the experiences of his own commonplace, practically colorless career, to the reading public, and the evidence of millions of readers attests to the fact that his work has been enjoyable, at least.

Any consideration of O.Henry's sources would not be complete without tracing the autobiographical significance of his characters. The principal incidents of the author's life may be traced with startling--and occasionally regretful--parallelism through the characters in many of his stories. A rapid glance at his life-history will not only explain the source of many of his characters, but will add validity to their literary existence.

O.Henry, or William Sydney Porter, was born in Greensboro, North Carolina where he lived until he was eighteen years of age. He went West to Texas to relieve a tubercular threat to his health. Here he lived among (but did not become a part of) all the various elements of the life of the times. He had occasion to observe cowboys, Mexicans, outlaws, and ranch-owners in the true atmosphere of their existence. He was newspaper editor, political-satirist, and bank-clerk, successively. The latter position involved him in an embezzlement charge which caused him to take leave abruptly. His wife and daughter remained in Texas. From San Antonio to Houston to New Orleans to South America through Central America was his meandering route.

Mrs. Porter's illness and subsequent death were responsible for the wanderer's return. He came back to suffer the sorrow of her demise and the disgrace of a three-year prison term. With his heart definitely set on a literary career, he set out for New York City. The remainder of his life (the most important

as far as his literary contributions are concerned) was spent in various locations in New York City, although he did go to Asheville, North Carolina, occasionally for relaxation.

In his youth, Porter read a great many "dime-novels ". In books of this type he met numerous characters who became his youthful acquaintances. The only other extensive reading for which he has been given credit is the classic, The Arabian Nights.

There follows a list of stories which should be illustrative of the autobiographical significance of O.Henry's characters:

"Thimble, Thimble"[1] presents a vivid portrait of the faithful old ex-slave who upholds the honor and the reputation of his beloved "White Folks" in a test of recognition. That picture was "drawn" by a true son of the old South (O.Henry).

The young man who stood at the beginning of the several direction in "Roads of Destiny"[2], is again O.Henry-like. The European setting, atmosphere, and characters are the product of young Will Porter's "dime-novel" experiences.

The heroine of "Schools, and Schools"[1], who won a worthy, wealthy husband even though she had never had a day of tutoring or of school of any sort in her life; Sanderson Spratt who is narrator of "The Handbook of Hymen"[3], works wonders with a collection of informative facts in a small handbook and considers the mastery of its contents a complete education; both speak for Porter. He had little or no respect for what he considered

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1. Options 2. Roads of Destiny 3. Heart of the West

the apparently useless, futile, and impractical "college education". In "The Atavism of John Tom Little Bear"[1], this "education" is practically wasted on an Indian. The characters in each case appear to be representatives of the author's opinions.

In ten other stories, at least, O.Henry's knowledge of pharmacy,acquired during early school days in his uncle's drug-store, figures prominently. Noteworthy is the story, "The Love-Philtre of Iky Schoenstein"[2], wherein a soporific,designed by the drug-clerk to prevent his sweetheart's eloping with a rival,works in reverse.

Little tubercular McGuire ("Hygeia at the Solito")[3], is carried from the sordid atmosphere of the great Eastern city to recuperate in the West. The degenerate, dying, ungrateful ex-light-weight pugilist stages a miraculous come-back:

Will Porter was a small man; he expressed great admiration for pugilists; he was tubercular, and he moved to Texas in order to better his health.

The reporter from Texas whose interview with President Cleveland in the "waggish editorial" titled "A Snapshot at the President"[1], is admittedly O.Henry.

In "Hearts and Crosses"[3], Webb Yeager departs from home in order to prove his mettle as a manager elsewhere, when his wife insists on retaining control of the cattle-business into which he (Webb) has married. The "cross"--their old signal of,"Come

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1. Rolling Stones 2. The Four Million 3.Heart of the West

home, with love and kisses"-- brings him galloping back to Mrs. Yeager and (surprise) a brand-new baby-girl:

Porter had left his wife at one time. There was also a daughter, Magaret. The illness of Mrs. Porter brought William Sydney back home, post-haste.

The embezzling charge of which Porter was convicted definitely influenced the characters and action in "The Guardian of the Accolade"[1]: Uncle Bushrod appeals to the chivalry in the heart of young Marse Robert to get him to return a valise which he has removed from the bank under most suspicious circimstances. Of course the valise is found to contain--not money, but--two quarts of good whiskey.

"Whistling Dick",[1] the fugitive tramp of "Whistling Dick's Christmas Stocking" could easily have been Porter heading South to escape the unpleasant circumstances connected with a shortage of funds in a Texas bank. The wanderer, O.Henry, next becomes a reporter who discovers Madame Tibault's missing twenty thousand dollars plastered over the wall in her private room as wall-paper ("Cherchez La Femme")[1]. These two stories are from the group representing the influence of Porter's experiences in and about New Orleans.

Billy Casparis, narrator-character of "The Fourth in Salvador"[1], successfully combined the celebration of a holiday observed in the United States with a Central American political revolution. Hilariously humorous is the manner in which

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1. Roads of Destiny

O.Henry treats these observations while in exile. He hobnobs with consuls, presidents, fugitives, and tramps through all the stories of Cabbages and Kings, as well as the separate "The Day We Celebrate"[1], and "The Theory and the Hound"[2],

From prison there emerged the author, O.Henry, who had acquired material for many stories from the other inmates of the penitentiary. "A Retrieved Reformation"[3] of Jimmy Valentine might easily be turned to represent Porter's resolve to keep within the law, henceforth.

The Gentle Grafter(s) of the Jefferson Peters stories are not vicious characters, as criminals are generally considered, but thoughtful, clever , likable creations who follow the tide of fortune lackadaisically and most humorously. These same characteristics belong to the personality of O.Henry.

The deep love and devotion which O.Henry expressed for his daughter, in his letters and in the very life he lived, are captured in the personality of Josiah Rankin, in "The Church with the Overshot Wheel"[1]: The miller's baby daughter, kidnapped by gypsies, returns to be recognized by her father in a miraculous manner.

There is the story of an article supposedly submitted to the New York Herald ("The Sparrows of Madison Square")[4] which appears to be a quaint record of the first literary failure of O.Henry in New York City.

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1. Sixes and Sevens 2. Whirligigs 3. Roads of Destiny
4. Twelve Stories

Quite often Rudolf Steiner sallied forth of an evening into the streets of New York to seek adventure, "just around the corner". Arthur W. Page says[1] of this hero of the story, "The Green Door": "The Story of"The Green Door", in its spirit and in its fact is just such a thing as might happen to him (O.Henry) any night".

The main character in "A Cosmopolite in a Cafe"[2]made a statement:"Petty pride in one's section or country will be wiped out", but he was willing to fight the man who had made disparaging remarks about his own birthplace.

In "Thimble, Thimble"[3], there is a young Southerner who has become successful in the business-world of the North. This "transplanted" Southerner bears many of the traits of O.Henry, and the circumstances surrounding his rise to success are similar, just as the adventure in the cafe ("A Cosmopolite in a Cafe") might easily have been an actual experience of the author.

The classic,The Arabian Nights, was a kind of Bible to O. Henry, evidently. The immortal Caliph roams the streets of "New-Bagdad-by-the-Subway" and dabbles in the affairs of his adopted subjects throughout many of the O.Henry stories.[4]

Riding the crest of the wave of his literary success, O. Henry gives advice on how to write short-stories, through the character of Petitt, in "The Plutonian Fire".[5]

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1. Arthur W. Page, The Complete Works of O.Henry, page 1326
2. The Four Million 3. Options 5. The Voice of the City
4. "The Caliph and the Cad", Sixes and Sevens
   "The Caliph, Cupid, and the Clock",The Four Million
   (Note) There are other illustrations of (4)

Again it is O.Henry who argues the fine points of story-writing with the character, Editor Westbrook, in "Proof of the Pudding"[1].

There are two stories connected with the author's second courtship. They are "Let Me Feel Your Pulse"[2], and "The Indian Summer of Dry Valley Johnson"[3]. In the first,he finds a beautiful girl and perfect health in the mountains of North Carolina. In the second,Dry Valley Johnson, "age thirty-five or thirty-eight", seems to be O.Henry courting the girl, Miss Sara Lindsay Coleman, of Asheville, North Carolina. This young lady became the second Mrs. William Sydney Porter.

The story which rings down the curtain on a meteoric literary career is "The Snow Man"[4]. Death stilled the hand of the author, even as the little drama--his last--was nearing completion. The dying man (O.Henry) entrusted the finishing touches to the hand of a rising young writer, Harris Merton Lyon. Quite significant is the fact that the narrator is a character in the story who lies injured on a couch in a mountain cabin to tell his tale of romance in the snow.

This review and examination of sources seems a logical step leading up to an analysis of the character delineation in O. Henry. A statement from Clayton Hamilton[5]is relative to the general idea:"Only after the process of creation is completed

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1.Strictly Business 2. Sixes and Sevens
3.Heart of the West 4. Twelve Stories
5.Clayton Hamilton, A Manual of the Art of Fiction,page 83

and a character stands living... need the author consider the various technical expedients which may be employed to make the reader conscious of the character as a living presence". We know that, with but few exceptions, O.Henry took his characters from the lives of real people.

His selection of characters may be considered unique in several respects, namely: the infusion of so much of his own personality, the close relating of his own life experiences to those of his characters, and the deeply sympathetic romanticizing of such characters as his tramps or city shop-girls of the lower and low-middle classes of society.[1]

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1. See statement by Blanche Colton Williams, Our Short-Story Writers, pages 203, 221

PART TWO

Disposition of Material

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Disposition of Material

The next questions naturally arising from the facts preceding are: What did O.Henry do with his characters taken from life-experiences and obsebvations? What technique did he employ? Does the technique measure up to the best literary standards of qualifications? In what manner is the work of O.Henry unique?

First of all, "What did O.Henry do with his characters-from-life?" The answer begins with the statement, "He made them worth knowing".

Says Clayton Hamilton[1], "Characters should be worth knowing". Professor T.R. Mather counters with the fact that, "If the author has sufficient skill, he can make his characters worthwhile, regardless of who they are". Therein lies the secret of successful characterization in O.Henry. With the skill of a true artist, he portrays (but does not create[2]) interestingly and romantically a class of people most often not considered worth knowing in the pages of literature or anywhere else. It is true, according to the unwritten laws of conventionality and custom, that our solid or our cultured or "better" citizens do not deliberately seek the acquaintance of tramps, or the uncultured,

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1. Clayton Hamilton, A Manual of the Art of Fiction, page 77
2. Fred Lewis Pattee, The Development of the American Short-Story, page 364

hungry shop-girls; or of grafters (even the"Gentle" Type) but O.Henry introduces them to readers who have evidently found a great deal of interest in them.

All of his characters are types. He makes romantic figures of them in his character portrayals, but in each case, the traits which identify a type predominate, and any individuality present is always only a peculiarity in an O.Henry character. The shop-girls, cowboys, clerks, and the starving artist, all dress, act and speak as would be expected of them, ordinarily. Even in the usual O.Henry-last-line denouement, where the cowboy may prove to be a "female who marries the hero"[1] who is not the-one- you- thought (see "The Marquis and Miss Sally"[1]) this fact holds true. The characters are often built up to represent one type; then a surprise-reversal at the very end only serves to emphasize the lack of individuality, because there is no further character delineation from that point.

They are romantic character-portrayals. The humor, whimsicality, pathos, and occasional tinge of bitterness exhibited are really life only as the author--and most often, the reader--would have it to be. O.Henry did not probe into the deeper emotions, for that would required a more serious treatment; consequently, any true reality in characterization is sacrificed. There is not a single bad woman in all his stories. The worst women, "Liz", the murderess in "The Guilty Party"[2], and

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1. Rolling Stones 2. The Trimmed Lamp

"Eloise Vashner", the suicide of "The Furnished Room"[1] are made to appear as merely the unfortunate victims-of-circumstance. The grafters are "gentle", or at least considerate; the "niggers" (as he very often calls them) are just as human and likable as anyone else, according to O.Henry, and it is easy to see that the author spoke not at all disparagingly when he freely used the term. There are no vicious or inhuman characters in any of O.Henry's works. The author captures the reader's sympathy for the very worst of them. The one possible exception is Shark Dodson in "The Roads We Take"[2], Although Major Caswell in "A Municipal Report"[3], is bad enough.

The skill of the author in creating interest in pure types, with little evidence of individuality is most unusual; but this particular phase of his art is almost concealed because of the harmonious integration of characterization technique with plot and setting. O.Henry knew where and when to place just the right amount of emphasis on plot, character, setting, or theme. On the basis of this fact, T.H.Uzzell[5] divides the stories into four groups as stories of character, complication-interest, thematic-interest, and atmosphere-interest.

Blanch C. Williams states[4], "It may be true that the O.Henry characters are all types--clubmen, fighters, thieves, policemen, touts, shop-girls, actors, stenographers, and what-not..

1. The Four Million 2. Whirligigs 3. Strictly Business
4. Blanche Colton Williams, Our Short-Story Writers, page 221
5. Thomas H. Uzzell, Narrative Technique, pages 104-112

..There are those who agree with William Marion Reedy that, 'As a depicter of New York's "Four Million", O.Henry has no equal for keen insight into the beauties and meannesses of character or motive', and if he did emphasize type, he placed upon it a hall-mark that stamps it his forever."

PART THREE (A)

The Technique of Delineation

PART THREE(A)

The Technique of Delineation

The next step leads logically into the analysis of the technique of character delineation which is the real core of this thesis, and it is there that whatever unique qualities to be found in O.Henry are accentuated.

Originality is one of the principal characteristics of the technique of character portrayal in O.Henry. This fact has already been sufficiently emphasized, but further mention can do no harm. This statement is not made with any disregard for the fact that it may be considered practically impossible for any author to be entirely original.

In order to do justice to the author in analyzing his methods, ten of his most outstanding stories were selected. The list was made from groups submitted by twelve persons variously qualified as authoritative--or at least representative-- readers:[1] Booth Tarkington, George Barr McCutcheon, a "one-thousandth reader", Owen Johnson, Mrs. William Sydney Porter (the author's second wife), Robert H. Davis, Arthur W. Page, Gilman Hall, a consultant for Doubleday-Doran and Company, Blanche Colton Williams, an anonymous contemporary writer, and (with apologies) the present writer.

The ten top stories were voted in order as follows:

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1. See pages 1367-1371, Doubleday, Doran and Company, The Complete works of O.Henry

1. "A Municipal Report", 2. "The Furnished Room", 3. "An Unfinished Story", 4. "The Gift of the Magi", 5. "Let Me Feel your Pulse", 6." Mamon and the Archer", 7."A Lickpenny Lover", 8."A Retrieved Reformation", 9."The Foreign Policy of Company 99", 10."The Day Resurgent".

In order to study fully all the phases of the delineation technique of O.Henry it was necessary to include several other stories in the group for consideration. In the list of additional works are: "The Marquis and Miss Sally";[11] Thimble, Thimble,"[12], and "A Cosmopolite in a Cafe".[13]

O.Henry made use of both the indirect and the direct methods of character delineation. In his earliest successes (after 1900 in New York City) the direct method prevails, but in his period of power (1904-1910) he skilfully combines the use of the indirect method with the direct in a manner not since exactly emulated by any other artist.

Most of his stories are told in the first person, and many are extremely subjective. This should seem to indicate a lack of professional craftsmanship or a lack of capacity to utilize any other than the more elementary, less artistic direct method, based on delineation by the author's exposition, description, psychological analysis, or reporting through other characters.[14]

1.,10. Strictly Business 2.,3.,4.,6.,The Four Million
5. Sixes and Sevens 7. The Voice of the City
8. Roads of Destiny 9. The Trimmed Lamp 11. Rolling Stones
12. Options 14. Clayton Hamilton, A Manual of the Art of Fiction, pages 83-89

But here again there is something very much akin to artistry in the technique of O.Henry. He combines the clarity of the direct with the indirect method in first describing his characters from an external point of view, then by means of gradual portrayal, the personality of the individual unfolds very objectively through the character's own speech and actions, or through the effect on other characters, of this speech or action of another character, or through the effect of environmental influences. He even clothes his characters very carefully, and in the manner of Geoffrey Chaucer[1], renders many of his types almost into individuals through detailed efforts to make the reader actually see them.

There are, to be sure, several rather mechanical tricks[2] which the author employs over and over again to reveal character traits. Arbitrarily, but conveniently, variations of his formulae may be grouped under four headings, according to method of delineation: 1. Recognition, 2. Surprise-Reversal of Characteristics, 3. Reversal of Attitudes and Intentions, and 4. Conventional Progression. These four form the bases for further detailed analysis. Therein may be seen the technical orderliness which, as in other art-forms, has often been mistaken for chaotic floundering.

Before considering the stories themselves, there is one other very important conclusion which should be mentioned.

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1. Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales
2. Fred Lewis Pattee, The Development of the American Short-Story, page 368

This presentation thus far has emphasized the uniqueness of the technique of O.Henry, and that basic observation is echoed in the slight praise of the "Thackerayan" attitude, by Carol L. Maxcy[1] who states that under certain circumstances it may be forgiven. Whether it be subtle comedy, clever quip, or roaring farce, the author is there, reaching out of the pages to place a friendly arm around the reader's shoulder. He takes you into his confidence. He chuckles along with you as he cracks about the pranks of his characters, or his own mistakes in grammar; or he objectively leaves the way open for you to follow the stark tragedy of the young man in "The Furnished Room"[2], or he may allow you to delve at your own risk into the cause of the suicide's troubles in that story.

The best-known O.Henry trick of character delineation may be listed under that general heading mentioned previously as the Surprise-Reversal of Characteristics. A striking illustration is the story, "The Marquis and Miss Sally":[3] Two young cowboys, one a son of an English Marquis, the other a son of a Texas cattle-man, are hired at the Diamond-Cross ranch. When they reach the scene of their first duties, they are greeted by the names, "Miss Sally" and "Marquis". The salutation is quickly explained to the disconcerted pair, for every cowboy-cook was called "Miss Sally", and any distinguished-looking fellow might be called "Marquis".

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1. Carol L. Maxcy, The Rhetorical Principles of Narration, page 165. 2. The Four Million 3. Rolling Stones

The surprise comes when Miss Sally proves to be the real Marquis, and his fine-featured companion is revealed as the beautiful daughter of the rough old Texan.

The portrayal is built up to foil the conventional-minded reader who is quick to jump to the wrong conclusions. The omniscient author, using first the direct method--but not inartictically--proceeds. He reveals the traits expected in a son of the Texan, beginning with a name that fits his character, for proper nomenclature is always indicative of character traits in O.Henry's work: "Old Bill Bascom..lived on Limping Doe Creek, Hardeman County, Texas." We note that the name fits the man, and the county is also well-named, and each belongs to Texas.

Next comes a description of the one whom the reader "knows" to be the son of old Bill, the Texan:.."The other applicant was stouter, and broad-shouldered, with fresh red complexion, somewhat freckled, reddish, curling hair, and a rather plain face, made attractive by laughing eyes and a pleasant mouth."... A fiery Texan is he--or so the author lets us suppose.

By the indirect method, the red-head proceeds to reveal his own traits without the author's interference. In reply to a request for a cook, he says:..."I'm willing to take the job until you've something else to offer."..From this we find that he is not vain; he is a practical, co-operative person, but not without ambition. This is the earliest indication that he might not be merely the son of a rough old Texan; but, on the other hand,

the traits are more likely listed as further indication of an humble lineage.

When addressed as "Miss Sally", he ".....started..but immediately recollected that "Miss Sally" is the generic name for the male cook...he recovered his composure with a grin.." That quick recovery and grin are typically American, so the reader is convinced that this <u>is</u> John Bascom, the Texan. Few Americans would grant that an Englishman might have the "quick-grin" type sense of humor.

In camp, ready for work on the range, he proves himself to be congenial, efficient, self-confident, and aggressive: "I'm the new cook, b' thunder! ..You chaps rustle up some wood.. a hot meal for you in thirty minutes," he says. The author helps out with further exposition: "Miss Sally's energy and good-humor..won the good opinion of the camp."

A few lines further on, exposition of character through the employer's speech proceeds: "I want you to take charge of the ranch accounts," he says to Miss Sally, seeming to indicate knowledge of the latter's previous experience. If the reader were not already certain that "Miss Sally" is John Bascom, he might recall that the "Marquis" was a former ranch-owner. But old John Bascom's son was also an experienced cattle-man.

When the author brings in a mock-marriage scene to interrupt a hazing around the cowboy's camp-fire, the reader begins to get suspicious as to the identity of the principals. Denouement comes swiftly, though not fully until the very last short par-

agraph. Miss Sally has just told the pseudo-Marquis that he is in love with her because he has known all along that the other is a woman. He explains: "I saw how rattled you got at the name, "Miss Sally"--which was meant for me--and my father w was Marquis of Borodale."

In order to lend credence to this Surprise-Reversal, in this case a complete reversal, the author has skilfully planted trait-indications to prepare for his surprise. They are well-timed and artfully placed.

At first, description appears far down in the middle of the fifth paragraph: "..One was a straight-set fellow with delicate handsome features, short brown hair, and smooth face, sun-burned to a golden brown."

Ten paragraphs later: "..turning angrily, with a bitten lip..."

By exposition, three paragraphs later:.".The Marquis proved to be a cheerful, pleasant fellow, always reserved, and taking no part in the rough camp frolics."

All of these trait-indications could be applied to a female character, but when the Marquis is able to drag four strong cowboys around (thirty-two paragraphs later) the reader is certain that this is the sober, serious reserved Englishman.
only eight paragraphs from the end:.."The Marquis leaned her head against his shoulder".., and there the surprise of the conclusion begins.

The author employs, through the indirect method, exposition and description, as well as portrayal through actions, speech, and environment. Noteworthy are the names which fit naturally both characters and locale.

Not always does O.Henry prepare his reader for his sudden, complete reversals of characteristics. "October and June"[1], wherein the conventional, older-man-seeking-young-wife idea is completely reversed, is one good story in which the author neglects any leads to account for the unexpected character changes at the end.

Although O.Henry's most powerful stories are thematic, even in this group, character-interest is created through the medium of O.Henry's Recognition device. "A Municipal Report"[2], the story which is said to be O.Henry's greatest and most absorbing work, is a thematic presentation of the dog-like devotion of an old Negro servant for his former owner's daughter. Recognition is involved in the discovery that rascally Major Caswell is the husband of the talented Azalea Adair, and that Uncle Caesar is the killer who removes Caswell (kills him) in order to save kind Azalea from his cruel persecution.

The story is told by a narrator-character who is an interested observer of events within the story. It is really O. Henry who is speaking to his reader and commenting on the locale or the characters of the story; or inviting you to "try the

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1. Sixes and Sevens 2. Strictly Business

chicken livers en brochette in Nashville, Tennessee, if you are ever down that way." Interruptions are numerous, and no apologies are offered, for he knows that he can hold your interest by his whimsical humor, his skill and his journalist-reporter-like audacity. The method is direct, for he describes meticulously his principals. Out of the eight thousand or more words of the story, he devotes at least three thousand words to the delineation of the character of the Negro, Uncle Caesar.

He employs the direct method, after casting economy to the winds in setting the scene in Nashville, Tennessee, describing in minute detail the appearance of big, black Uncle Caesar, the hack-driver: "He was a stalwart Negro, older than the pyramids.. wore the most remarkable coat. It reached to his ankles, and had once been a Confederate grey in color."..Description of the coat continues for nearly two hundred words more.

"In deep rumbling tones", says the narrator in describing the voice of old Caesar.

"The thick, long, gorilla-like arm of the Negro barred the way. "What are you gwine there for, boss?".. These words indicate a big, burly, impertinent individual.

The narrator protests the exorbitant fee for the trip to see Azalea Adair (via Hack, from the hotel to her residence) but finally succumbs in true Southern fashion, when the demand becomes a request from a serf to a member of the "Ante-Bellum" aristicracy. He raves: "You old fool nigger, can't you tell people from other people when you see 'em?"

"Boss", says Caesar, "I ain't demandin'it now, suh; after I knows whar you's from."

The author continues with exposition and a bit of psychological analysis: "Peace and confidence settled upon his heavy features.. he had come into an "inheritance". He knew; he knew. I gave him two one-dollar bills.." Here we are able to see evidence of the attitude of the indulgent Southerner toward a good Negro, and the presentation is very picturesque indeed.

There follows a description startlingly compact, but absolutely complete, of a very interesting character, Miss Azalea Adair whom the narrator had come to see. He had been authorized to engage her services as a writer for his magazine, and to place her under contract, if possible, for her poetry and essays were very highly rated by the publishers:..."Azalea Adair, fifty years old, white-haired, a descendant of the cavaliers, as thin and frail as the house she lived in, robed in the cheapest, and cleanest dress I ever saw, with an air as simple as a queen's, received me."

The sentence structure is poor, perhaps, but there is a complete picture presented with the "greatest economy of means".

From Azalea he learns that her knowledge has been derived from inference and by inspiration."..I listened to her voice which was like a harpsichord,".. continues the narrator, directly delineating the character to his reader. His words are sufficient explanation without any addition from any other source.

In the next three paragraphs, Azalea reveals that she has traveled extensively, and has seen life in many and various places The Southern hospitality is evidenced too, when she says, "You must have a cup of tea before you go."

There is a little girl who lives with Azalea. With one stroke of his pen (O.Henry used pencil) almost, the artist lets us "see" her: "...In shuffled a small negro girl about twelve, barefoot, and not very tidy, glowering at me with thumb in mouth and bulging eyes.." The picture is very clear and complete. From the external picture the reader may determine the traits of the child's character.

After having seen one of his dollar-bills in the hands of Azalea, he is able to surmise that there was a connection of some sort with Caesar, in that household. This is confirmed when he later admits (Caesar admits): "I belonged to her father, suh.. Dat is puhffeckly correct, suh," he answers humbly. Now it may be seen that the old giant Negro has turned his humble side to the narrator on learning of his good intentions toward his old master's daughter. He discloses the fact that he is living up to his chosen role of protector-provider.

Next there follows delineation by means of description, exposition, and psychological analysis of one of the very few despicable characters in O.Henry. Major Caswell is his name, and he is the husband of Azalea Adair (Caswell). She had not written her full name on her manuscript; so the investigator does not discover the fact that she is married to Caswell un-

til late in the story: "..He was one of those despicable, roaring, advertising bibers.." Meanness of character is indirectly delineated in the immediately ensuing action of Caswell. The scene is in the local hotel, at the bar: "With an air of producing millions, he drew two one-dollar bills from his pocket."

Later in the story, Azalea Adair collapses because of hunger one day during the narrator's sojourn, and the doctor who is called continues the delineation; or rather, characterization of the principals is continued through him by the author. Says he: "The result of poverty, pride, and starvation.. Married to a drunken, worthless loafer... Old Caesar's grandfather was a king in Congo. Caesar himself has royal ways, as you will observe."

The one good trait in the character of Caswell is revealed at the end--at his end. He had put up a good fight for his life and for the fifty-dollar manuscript fee which he had taken from his wife.

The incriminating evidence of Caesar's latest act of devotion was carefully concealed by the narrator-character.

It is remarkable that his greatest story (at least one of his greatest) should should have so many variations from the ordinary standards for characterization-technique in successful narration.[1]

In many of the stories the Recognition device employed by the author is much more mechanical. His art is too obvious in

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1.see chart, PART FIVE, page 57

such stories as "The Theory and the Hound"[2], or "Thimble, Thimble"[1]. In each of these stories, one person, in the presence of a witness or a fourth person, interviews two other people who are very much alike, in order to determine which of the two is the one he seeks.

Reversal of Attitude is the simplest device used by O. Henry in his efforts to deviate from the conventional. In everyday life, the principle involved may be observed in the case of any young man who vehemently declares himself immune to the wiles or attractions of women, but who marries at the very first good opportunity. One of the most popular stories of this type by O.Henry is "The Cosmopolite in a Cafe"[3], but "The Day Resurgent"[4] is a better character-story. As such, it naturally would serve the purpose intended here for analysis.

In "The Day Resurgent" the hero is a "hard-boiled" young man who appears to be a grudging provider for his mother and his father who has lost his sight. Through his gruffness there glows a tenderness which may raise a slight lump in the throat of even his most casual reader (or possibly, the cold-blooded critic).

There at the beginning is O.Henry, saying "Hello", in his whimsically humorous way throughout the first eight paragraphs, (evidently O.Henry was paid on a cent-per-word basis for his stories) as he sets his scene on Easter Day. Next he introduces

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1. Options 2. Whirligigs 3. The Four Million
4. Strictly Business

Danny McCree, his mother, and blind Mr. McCree, his father; then he stops to comment on the tobacco-smoking enjoyment of blind men, since Mr. McCree is sitting there in the window of the flat smoking his pipe. He openly invites you to express your opinion on the subject--perhaps your lips actually frame words in reply--more than likely they don't. The author-omniscient continues for a while, then a character of the story takes up the comment: "'Tis Easter Day", says Mrs. McCree, in her kitchen.

"Scramble mine," says Danny.

Two sentences; two thoughts; two persons characterized as thoroughly as if volumes had been written about them. The most exacting critic would forgive at once any previous wandering the author may have done before going into the heart of his story. Those two sentences represent the economy, the compactness of which O. Henry was capable, and throughout his work there is further evidence of his artistry in this respect.

We know that Mrs. McCree appreciates the finer side of life. To Danny, a day is just another something to start with a dish of ham-and-eggs.

Danny's Sunday outfit comes in for a well-deserved share of the reader's attention, for it may--or may not--be indicative of the character traits to be discovered in him: "In the Sabbath morning costume of the Canal Street Importing house dray chauffer--frock coat, striped trousers, patent leathers, gilded trace chain across the front of his vest, and wing collar, rolled-brim derby and butterfly bow from Schonstein's (between Four-

teenth street and Tony's fruit stand)..." This outfit seems to indicate that his taste and inclinations tend toward the cheap, gaudy, loud, and immodest side of life.

"You'll be goin' out, this day, of course, Danny," says old man McCree a little wistfully. "'Tis a kind of holiday, they say. Well, it's fine spring weather..." Then we know that Mr. McCree is not the complaining type but one who bears his misfortune with fortitude, glad of the happiness of others.

Next, Danny gives a clue to his real character--if one knows something of the technique of O.Henry: "Why should I not be going out?!....in his grumpiest chest tones, "Am I as good as a horse? One day of rest my team has a week. Who earns the money for the rent and the breakfast you've just eat?.." From these words we are led to believe that he is arrogant, selfish, and cruel.

Somehow the old man seems to understand. He sees something in the lad that the reader has as yet not been able to grasp. He knows the true nature of his son; so he does not scold the harshness of the tone of his son's words: "All right, lad..I'm not complainin'. A good fine day to ye, lad. Times I wished your mother had larned to read, so I might hear the rest about the hippopotamuses."

"Now what is this foolishness he talks of hippopotamuses?" asks Danny of Mrs. McCree. She doesn't know either, but she does know that: "There was no better nor stronger than him when he had his two eyes. 'Tis a fine day, son. Injoy yerself

ag'inst the morning. There will be cold supper at six."

Here are characters whose love and mutual respect are too deeply ingrained to be expressed by mere, inadequate words. Danny seems to be a kind of tyrant, but there is a suspicion of good in him which the author artfully keeps beneath the surface of a gruff exterior.

Through the conversation with his girl-friend, Katy Conlon, we learn of their regard for each other, and we learn that he has attended church rather regularly. He accompanies her to church on this Easter Day, but he can't get his mind off of "Hippopotamuses". This is evidence that he is not selfish and that he thinks of others, especially his father. He leaves Katy on this beautiful day, when he remembers at last that his father loved to hear him read from The History of Greece, and "Peloponnesus" was the word which the old man had confused with "hippopotamuses."

"Tears were running from old man McCree's eyes." He says, "Do you hear our lad readin' to me? There is none finer in the land. My two eyes have come back to me again. And now you will be off to see Katy in the evening. Well enough."

Danny bursts forth (as gruffly as he could, under the circumstances): "Who pays the rent and buys the food that is eaten in this house? Have I no right to stay in it? After supper there is yet to come the reading of the battle of Corinth, 146 B.C.... Am I nothing in this house?"

Yes, Danny is not doing this noble little act with any re-

luctance or with any idea of reward or obligation of sense of duty; he is doing it because he likes to make the old man happy and because he enjoys making others happy. He already knows that he is a good provider and a steady worker, and nearly all of the delineation was accomplished through character revelation through the indirect method of speech, actions, and effect on other characters in the story.

The Reversal of attitudes device is continued in another group of stories in which character delineation is effected in practically the same manner as Reversal of Intentions. There is no great difference in the technique of either. "Hygeia at the Solito"[1] is a story which furnishes a fine illustration of O. Henry's use of The Reversal of Intention method:

Cricket McGuire is taken from the city in the East to live in the healthful atmosphere of the West where he might rid himself of the tuberculosis which wastes his meagre frame. He is very ungrateful and makes his benefactor regret his kindness, at least for a period of time. A doctor pays a visit to the ranch, and through mistaken identity, the dying man is declared to be in perfect health. McGuire allows himself to be thrown into the rough cow-camps where he more than repays the kindnesses tendered him by a complete reversal of intentions and attitudes. He regains his health, wins the hearts of his newly-found friends, and works diligently in order to prove his grati-

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1. Heart of the West

tude.

The author fails to give sufficient plausibility to the miraculous change in the character of McGuire. There are no logical steps of development leading to any change of attitude. It is a sudden reversal not properly accounted for--but the author hides his mistakes by creating deep interest in plot and incident.

As for the conventional mode, it was impossible for O.Henry to avoid it entirely. He added a touch of the conventional to his work, occasionally, and the experiment was very successful, at least from the point of view of many readers. The best known of his characters delineated in this manner,is Jimmy Valentine of "A Retrieved Reformation"[1].

The story is not narrated in the first person, but by the omniscient author method. The author has practically effaced himself (discounting any autobiographical significance at this point). Delineation technique is effective through the indirect method, by speech, action, environment, as well as the effect of one character on the others. Only plausibility is violated at the end.[2] The illusion is maintained throughout, with no O.Henry-like wise-cracking or opinionative breaks in the continuity of the narration.

As the story opens, we discover that Jimmy Valentine is a liar as well as a convicted safe-cracker: "You're not a bad fel-

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1. Roads of Destiny 2. Carl and Mark Van Doren, American and British Literature, page 342

low at heart," says the warden. "Stop cracking safes and live straight." Says Jimmy, "Why, I never cracked a safe in me life."

He has normal appetites for things not always available (in that day, at least) to those who sojourn in our penitentiaries. After loading up on foods, Jimmy returns to former haunts and former pursuits, just as dapper as ever: "He was now dressed in tasteful and well-fitting clothes", and with his suit-case full of burglar's tools, he stopped in at Mike's for a Seltzer-and-milk. One good quality--for his profession, anyway--was his temperance. "He never touched hard drinks."

"Ben Price knew Jimmy's habits. Long jumps, quick get-aways, no confederates, and a taste for good society."..This statement concerning the detective who tracks down Jimmy is further portrayal of his character.

There is enough clever conversation and repartee to represent the O.Henry trademark: While "casing" a bank in the little town of Elmore, Jimmy spies his "affinity". Cleverly he draws information from the nearest person--a boy. "Isn't that lady Miss Polly Simpson?" he asks..."Naw", says the boy. "She's Annabel Adams. Her Pa owns the bank."

In typical O.Henry fashion, one smile from Annabel, and Jimmy reforms completely. After basking in the light of her good graces for a year, he writes to his old friend and associate in crime: "I tell you, Billy, she's an angel. She believes in me. I wouldn't do another crooked thing for the whole world."

Jimmy, alias Ralph Spencer, exhibits the sincerity of his love as well as the courage in his heart, when he jeopardizes his entire future existence and newly-found security in order to save the life of a little girl trapped in the safe of Mr. Adam's bank. Ben Price happens on the scene at the time of the thrilling rescue, as Jimmy cracks his last safe, but he refuses to take him to prison: "Guess you're mistaken, Mr. Spencer," says Ben when Jimmy offers to give himself up. "I don't believe I recognize you."

Perhaps there are detectives like that, who might trail a man for years, then let him go free. This ending is conventional because it is "usual" for the hero to get the heroine and live happily ever afterward. It is seldom that O.Henry adds no strange twist in his character delineation, even in the very last line.

Characterization traits revealed in an environment where degradation and degeneration are inevitable bring forth another of the O.Henry stories of conventional pattern. "The Guilty Party" is the title of this illustration of Conventional Progression.

Lizzie, as a little girl, was forced to play in the streets because her parents were negligent. She strayed into bad company when she grew up. She caught her "man" with another woman; so she killed him. Suicide was the easiest way out for her.

In this story narration is done by an omniscient author who remains carefully in the background until near the end of

the story. After the tragedy is complete, he enters to offer his opinions and to castigate negligent parents "who won't play with their children". To a large extent, the characters reveal their own character-traits by speech and by their actions rather than by any external exposition.[1]

The characters here are destined for destruction from the start. In the conventional manner, they go to meet the inevitable. In like manner are many of the shop-girls, hungry artists (there are many, very many hungry characters scattered throughout the works of O.Henry) and poor clerks treated, but quite often O.Henry adds the twist of a surprise ending to bring a "Prince Charming" to a fair "Cinderella", most unexpectedly. Any over-emphasis on denouement of characterization in surprise ending might lead to an infringement of plot analysis which is not the purpose of this thesis to treat.

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1. see "The Guilty Party" in the volume titled The Trimmed Lamp.

PART THREE (B)

The Technique of Delineation

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The Technique of Delineation

A reiteration at this point will be indicative of the direction of the second section of PART THREE.

In order to facilitate the analysis which purports to examine the conventional and especially the unique phases of O. Henry's technique of characterization, two groupings were made:

All stories were listed according to the central interest in each as being either thematic, or of complication, atmosphere, or character interest. This manner of grouping was suggested by the consideration of the method of Thomas Uzzell in his book on Narrative Technique.[1] The "top ten"[2] stories of O.Henry fit into the pattern in this manner:

Thematic: "A Municipal Report(1)", "An Unfinished Story(3)", and "A Lickpenny Lover(7)".

Complication-interest: "The Gift of the Magi(4)", "The Foreign Policy of Company 99(9)", and "The Furnished Room(2)".

Atmosphere-interest: "Let Me Feel your Pulse(5)", and "Mamon and the Archer(6)".

Character-interest: "A Retrieved Reformation(8)", and "The Day Resurgent(10)".

Then, from the four technical devices used most often by O.

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1. Thomas Uzzell, Narrative Technique, pages 104-112

2. See page 15 of this work(thesis) for the volume-title of the ten stories listed here.

Henry in character portrayal (Recognition, Suprise-Reversal of Characteristics, Reversal of Attitudes and Intentions, and Conventional Progression) the stories best suited for illustrative purposes in the "top ten", along with several others, were selected for analysis.

Although the four mechanical devices mentioned may be stretched to include most of O.Henry's works, there are two groups which require separate consideration. The first measures up to the title of Caricatures[1] and evolves from two sources: "tall-tales" told to O.Henry while he was in prison, and the author's own cartooning proclivities transferred from drawings into word-pictures which are, truly, exaggerations.

The second group is made up of stories connected by a slender thread of continuity in complication and in character-interest. These stories include the Central American native-type which completes this treatment of the author's technique. Most of the stories in this group are principally atmosphere stories. They are to be found in the volumes, Roads of Destiny, and Cabbages and Kings, and the scenes are laid, not only in Central America, but in New Orleans, Louisiana, as well. The group of stories, specifically, which represents or illustrates the Continued Character type is the volume, Cabbages and Kings, O.

1.Note: Earlier in this work, the statement was made that all of O.Henry's characters are types. A caricature is the extreme opposite of type, but it must be re-emphasized that actuality and the illusion of reality are maintained with the type-characters, and some of them almost live for the author;but the caricatures are not meant to be considered either as living or probable.

Henry's nearest approach to a novel.

O.Henry's caricatures come up for consideration first of all in this final analysis of delineation technique.

The central figure in the volume of stories titled The Gentle Grafter is Mr. Jefferson Peters. He is the chief cartooning instrument of this group of characters.

Outside the Jeff Peters'volume, the best caricature is that of the impish boy who is kidnapped in the story "The Ransom of Red Chief"[1](story rated number one in voting by Booth Tarkington).

Analysis of the manner in which "The Red Chief" is delineated will serve as an introduction to the delineation examination of the Jeff Peters' stories:

While sojourning in little Maypole, Alabama, two traveling grafters decide on a kidnapping as a means of augmenting their sinking fortunes. Their objective is a wealthy gentleman's small son. However, the little fellow proves to be more than a match for the kidnappers, and they are soon glad to pay the father a sum of money to rescue them from the tough little fellow who insists on playing "Wild Indians" too realistically for their well-being.

The story is narrated in a confidential, "now-I'll-tell-one fashion"--in the first person, of course. Character is delineated through the direct and the indirect methods in combination,

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1. Whirligigs

but it is mainly through the self-portrayal by speech, action, and the effect on others that the actors' appearance and personality are revealed. In the Caricature, O.Henry makes his characters interesting by making them roaringly funny, quaintly likable, and definitely admirable (one can admire "devilishness"). Compared to little Red Chief, "Peck's Bad Boy"[1] was quite a saintly character.

O.Henry does not insist on the reader's believing what he tells him about his Caricatures; he offers them for the reader's enjoyment and dares him to tell a "bigger one". Such is the career of Mr. Jefferson Peters.[2]

The stories in The Gentle Grafter are narrated by a person who generally repeats a story which Peters is telling to him of one of his(Peters') experiences. It is a basic first person re-telling a story. Under such circumstances, exaggeration is certainly to be expected. Each story is merely the review of another "racket" or graft adventure. Humor is the basis of reader-interest, but there are the usual clever O.Henry tricks and surprises throughout the stories, and occasionally at the end.

For specific examination in detail, "The Octopus Marooned" is about as good as any other of the group, since they all are basically alike:

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1. George Wilbur Peck, Peck's Bad Boy
2. See comment by Arthur H. Page, The Complete Works of O.Henry, page 1357

Jeff and his associates are out to make an easy, not-ex - actly-within-the-law living off of those who can afford to support their "confidence" schemes. In "The Octopus Marooned", Andy Tucker is Jeff's pal. They secure a monopoly on the liquor trade during a flood in a Western mining town. Their graft is ruined when the silver-tongued Andy gets drunk himself, and preaches temperance to their customers. Jeff and Andy combine to portray their own various traits. This is done by both direct and indirect delineation. Jeff's language is the clever repartee of O.Henry, and he characterizes himself almost entirely by his own speech and actions, the basic narrator assisting occasionally. Says he (direct method--exposition and description) of his partner, Andy Tucker: "That man was the most talented conniver...was educated, too, besides having lots of useful information."

After cornering the liquor market, Jeff continues (gradual portrayal method--direct) by saying: "Behind one end of the bar sits Jefferson Peters, ready to make change or corpses as the case may be. Andy sits on the safe in his neat blue suit and gold-banded cigar."... From this we get the impression that Jeff is quite a formidable person, while Andy is more of the dapper type.

The story progresses: Sales soar. Business booms; so Andy the "Tee-totaler", gets drunk. Jeff philosophizes: "There are two times when you can never tell what will happen next. One is when a man takes his first drink; and the other is when a

woman takes her latest.". Evidently Mr. Peters is a worldly-wise man; practical-minded, and one who puts a wealth of thought into a few words.

Andy says of himself: "Drink always drives me to oratory." Evidence of his ability along the lines of speech-making may be observed in a last-line of denouement and exaggeration: Some one has just reported to Jeff the stunt which Andy pulled off while in his state of intoxication. Jeff asks what the speech was about. "Temperance", says the informer, "and when he got through, every man there signed the pledge for a year."

Emphasis on character portrayal is slight, for chief interest here lies in what the characters say and do rather than what they are. The informative value of this phase of the analysis is contained in determining how the author proceeds to manipulate such characters. Their conversation reveals his method. Part of the writer's artistry is in knowing where, when, and what to emphasize.

Finally, O. Henry's technique may be observed in his Continued Character, or Character-Continuation type, as seen in the volume Cabbages and kings.

The central figure is Frank Godwin, an American resident of Anchuria, Central America. He is the key-man who influences the happy consummation of a revolution and two love-affairs--three, counting his own.

The denouement is the conventional type. This story-group reveals that O.Henry aspired to be a novelist, but his charac-

ters do not develop; at each appearance of Frank Godwin, in the various stories, he shows merely a different trait which was a part of him,very obviously, too, from the very beginning.

Chief character interest at this point is O.Henry's treatment of a native character. Very prominent at first observation is nomenclature.[1] His names for his native characters fit the natives and their environment very well, and his meagre acquaintance with Spanish is used to the very best advantage.

The author's democratic treatment is still in evidence. In the section (or story) "Rouge et Noir", the chief character proves to be a well-trained, cultured native in clever disguise, who returns to lead his people and to take the reins of government from usurping hands.

"The Admiral" section of this group is devoted principally to the depicting of the natives in their ridiculously pompous, poverty-stricken little kingdom: Senor Carrera, ragged, vain, loyal, and child-like, is made admiral of the Anchurian Navy (consisting of one small sloop). No pay is connected with the "office", but Carrera proudly accepts, patches his rags into a uniform, and proudly marshals his six trusty, poor, and dirty cohorts for duty at sea.

This action and attitude give a vivid insight into the character of the people of Central America,as O.Henry saw it, at least. There is the portrayal O.Henry would have his reader

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1. See comment by Stephen Leacock, The Complete Works of O.Henry, page 1340

see: the high and the low, even in Central America. (Emphasis on the low, of course, but the picture is not so clearly drawn as in his portraits of the New Yorkers).

Characters reveal themselves by their actions and speech in this group rather than by any block of exposition by the author. They too, are definitely types. The nearest approach to an individual characterization is Ramon Olivarro, romantic hero-revolutionist of Anchuria, for O.Henry leaves only a vague picture of the rest of them in his reader's mind.

The case of the cockle-burrs in "Shoes" deserved mention, but there is no special character technique involved here in this extremely humorous episode, except the exaggeration already mentioned in connection with Caricatures.

Whether the manner of delineation be direct or indirect, there is always a touch or an injection of something from his own personality in all of O.Henry's stories. He could never be entirely objective, and in spite of this which might be considered a weakness in many other artists, it is the secret of O. Henry's greatest appeal. It is that part of the uniqueness in his technique which has led many to consider his characterization highly successful. Any writer with a personality such as his may be justified in capitalizing upon it to a certain extent. We can hardly expect another O.Henry to appear. There will be others who achieve success through some phase of his technique. That possibility and the attendant analysis of similar techniques are a part of the section to follow.

PART FOUR

Comparison of Technique

PART FOUR

Comparison of Delineation Techniques

O.Henry's method of character portrayal may be presented more clearly for examination if the principal features are taken separately for consideration. In the work of various authors there are to be found dominant features of delineation technique which bear at least a slight similarity(most often superior) to those found in O.Henry. Critics claim--with a high degree of truth, perhaps-- that O.Henry lacks universality; but on the other hand, he is often called a "Yankee Maupassant"; or he is compared with Dickens or Hardy, or any of several other prominent European writers because of some particular phase of his work. In view of this fact, there may be found qualities which we Americans might take the liberty to call"O.Henry-like" even in the work of the British James Matthew Barrie.

In-as-much as the following comparison involves the consideration, principally,of only <u>one</u> each of the stories written by James M. Barrie, Sherwood Anderson, Ring Lardner, and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, an acknowledgment is necessary at this point: Such a procedure may seem rather incongruous, but the scope of this thesis is admittedly limited; therefore, the author has selected what he considers work representative of each of the authors named <u>only</u> in order to highlight,separately, features in the technique of O.Henry.

O.Henry's way of delineating character in a manner showing such traits as deep sympathy for the people who appear in his

stories, and a wonderful understanding of them is captured most exquisitely by James M. Barrie in stories such as his "The Inconsiderate Waiter". He does here for London what O.Henry does for New York, and one is forced to admit that he has a charm and a technique in his delineation that are even more artistic, in a different way, than anything to be found in the good, crude, natural, and American genius of O.Henry:

William, the waiter at a fashionable club finds, in the person of a wealthy cultured patron, one apparently resisting but truly faithful friend and benefactor whom he serves each day.

The aristocratic club-man is the narrator whose tongue belies his heart. The kindnesses he is prompted to do through a soul that is noble prove that even the snobbish upper-classes can be human. It is the delicate, artistic gradual portrayal by which the character of William is revealed,as well as the very human character of nature little seven-year-old Jenny that is revealed through the gentleman's conversation. Though his remarks are anti-democratic and definitely snobbish, he does everything in his power to aid poor William. In this respect he is really the aristocratic counterpart of Danny McCree of O.Henry's "The Day Resurgent."[1]

Barrie's own language is perfect, but he knows,too, the

1.Strictly Business

language and the hearts of the people of the street of London. There is a quaint charm, a bit of humor, and remarkable vividness in his characterization. There is unity of point-of-view. The illusion follows through consistently from the beginning to the end. Whatever subtle opinions appear are part of the narration. The characters reveal themselves by portraying their personalities ao the club-man in speech to him, in their actions and in their attitude toward him and toward each other. The difficult but more artistic indirect method of delineation predominates. Jenny proves her worth as a nurse and as a messenger--in fact, she is quite a person of responsibility in spite of her age--through her conversation(perfect vernacular) and through her deeds. She is no respecter of persons. To the gentleman she says, "Ain't you the green one, though," in reply to his expression of surprise on learning of the condition of William's domestic affairs.

William, whose wife is ill after the birth of their baby, is portrayed as a diligent, faithful, poorly-paid husband--a human being as well as a waiter of London in a highly exclusive club. The narrator emphasizes the kindly sympathy and understanding of his nature by means of "de-emphasizing", clever phraseology, and down-to-earth humor, thereby bringing in to play an O.Henry favorite, the Reversal of Attitudes and Intentions, or the employing of opposites in speech to indicate a trait of character. Further revelation comes in to account for this deep sympathy which the aristocrat pretended to himself

that he wished to conceal; he had lost his wife before the time of his affair with William. Because of this and because of the tenderness of his heart, he was able really to sympathize.

Selection of the subjects from the low level of society and making them worthy of the reader's interest, through skilful character delineation are features of each of these author's literary contributions.

Back to America, the use of the vernacular in characterization may be examined in the work of Ring Lardner and Sherwood Anderson, since this, too, is a part of O.Henry's work. Their work appears to be artistic, finished products in the use of slang and local-color for character portrayal. Both writers are quite different from O.Henry in consistency and objectives.

Ring Lardner's "Hair-Cut" portrays a local-color character, Jim Kendall, whose misfortune, so justly deserved, is a warning which all practical jokers--peculiarly American--may heed. There is an undercurrent of viciousness that will not be found anywhere in O.Henry.

In a story reviewed earlier in this present work, there is mention of the fact that O.Henry worked at his last little drama on his death-bed. In that story, "The Snow Man"[1], the characters are delineated in the manner of those in Bret Harte's "The Outcasts of Poker Flat". The most unromantic person in the snow-bound group carries off the beautiful girl-- which is no

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1. Twelve Stories

more than one should expect in an O.Henry story. O.Henry's character of the "cook" is just the opposite of Harte's"Uncle Billy".

Another author and another phase of O.Henry technique are seen in the work of Thomas Bailey Aldrich. He wrote and became prominent before O.Henry, but the latter cannot be accused of imitation his work. There are no other points of similarity in technique, and in the case of O.Henry, the surprise-ending usually is a change in character traits, sudden and unaccounted for(Aldrich, too, is noted for his surprises at the end of his stories). Aldrich is more plausible and orderly in his delineation.

Aldrich's epistolary story, "Marjorie Daw" is a fine character study for a student of the technique of characterization. Marjorie Daw is a person actually created through correspondence, letter by letter, from the imagination of a friend of the convalescent John Fleming. Marjorie's character is portrayed by the letter-writer not only through exposition, but through the things she does and says, and her effect on the others(created along with her). She becomes the ideal girl for any man to fall in love with, and the wonder of it is that she was made to appear so real and alive. O.Henry could hardly have done this to any of his characters. The job is done with the author almost completely effaced. O.Henry could never have been as objective as Aldrich was in this case. That the convalescent falls in love with Marjorie Daw is no surprise

to the reader. In fact, the reader would wonder why, if he should fail to go tumbling for such a delightful creature. Aldrich made his creature live. The illusion of reality is kept perfectly and objectively down to the very end. There the explanation by the author spoils, not only the imaginary love-affair of the convalescent, but also the illusion of reality for the reader. The similarity to O.Henry is not purely one of character technique, but of complication-interest as well. There, characterization is worthwhile for analysis since the reader is able to draw a fairly clear picture of what the three letter-writers are like, and their personality traits are delineated very clearly by what they say to each other, how it is meant to be interpreted, and the effect of their words on each other. We know that the injured man is wealthy, temperamental, athletic, sociable, impatient, stubborn, aggressive, selfish, spoiled, and cultured in spite of all these things; yet this was not done through any direct exposition methods in the story. Perhaps O.Henry would have profited by a few hours with the works of Aldrich; but then there may not have been even an author named O.Henry.

Pattee compares O.Henry with Poe:[1] "The characters of Poe often leave the audience quivering with horror; O.Henry leaves them chuckling with laughter.. to read him is almost to feel his physical presence..He was a Harlequin Poe with modern laughter

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1. Fred Lewis Pattee, The Development of the American Short-Story, page 366

in place of gloom..he was utterly without Poe's reverence for the literature of power, he was without simplicity, without his universality, without his ability to stand with the great, serious literary creators of the world"(nor did O.Henry aspire to any such--"high-brow", he would have called it--position).

PART FIVE

Critical Evaluation

PART FIVE

Critical Evaluation of Technique of Characterization

At this point, a second brief reiteration of the manner in which all previous conclusions here drawn may be effected by means of pertinent questions, and the answers to them will indicate the direction of this concluding section on evaluation:

Number one is: What does the author set out to do with his characters?

The answer is: He set out to entertain his readers.

Number two: How does he make his characters entertaining and interesting?

The answer is: He portrays them in a skilful manner, basing their existence on actuality, with a democratic treatment which gives them a wide range of appeal. In this technique of his the key-word is "originality", or rather,"uniqueness".

Number three: What good is that which he has accomplished by means of his technique? Of what literary value are his works and the method by which they were produced as illustrations of the "right-or-wrong" in delineation technique?

The answer to number three is contained in the remainder of PART FIVE which follows immediately.

The block of favorable comment comes in for first consideration:(Note that a commentary accompanies each quotation)

Henry James Forman[1]: "The whole ruck and rabble of life..

1.H.J. Forman, The Complete Works of O.Henry, page 1034

are set forth with keen knowledge..humor..and smiling pathos."

The comment is truly justified. Characters of "An Unfinished Story"[1], and of "The Furnished Room"[1] adequately substantiate the statement.

William Lyon Phelps:[2] "The professional jaded critics found in his writing a freshness and originality amounting to genius."

This is true, except that there are many critics who frown on the lawlessness of the technique employed by O.Henry.

A.St. John Adcock:[3] "You come to think of his men and his women ...as people he has known...he makes them so vividly actual to you."

This same author later admits that the characters are all types. They are interesting, yes, but they do not come to life.

Stephen Leacock:[4] " Mr. Peters,[5] who acts as narrator, typifies the itinerant grafter..all the world loves a genial and ingenious grafter...Robin Hood, Alfred Jingle, Scapin, a Raffles.. of this glorious company is Mr. Jefferson Peters."

Rather high-class company for any character of O.Henry, but Mr. Leacock has supported his own statement with a strong piece of concrete evidence in the character of Jeff Peters.

Arthur W. Page[6]: "He told a great many stories in the

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1. The Four Million 5. The Gentle Grafter
(1., 5., 4., and 6. are from The Complete Works of O.Henry)
2. W.L.Phelps, page1365 3. A.St. J.Adcock, page 1349
4. S.Leacock, page 1344 6. A. W. Page, page 1327

first person...whether they were real or imaginary? His stock reply was:'Never question the validity of a joke'!

This statement by Mr. Page helps to account for some of the farcical attributes of types and caricatures in O.Henry. Of course they were not meant to be taken for fact--but who hasn't enjoyed a tale which is stretched a bit-- occasionally, anyway?

Stephen Leacock:[1] "O.Henry's works abound in ingenious nomenclature. In all the two hundred stories... there is hardly a name that is inappropriate or without a literary suggestiveness."

Entirely justified is this comment, though it would be difficult for one without knowledge of Spanish to measure much of the "appropriateness" in a number of his stories.

On the negative side of the critical ledger the following criticism is worthy of comment:

Fred Lewis Pattee:[2] "He worked without truth, without moral consciousness, and without a philosophy of life. He created no characters: he worked with puppets, lay figures without souls..We see them moving before us, but we know them not at all."

But Pattee tempers his own criticism: "His technique.. entirely American, even more so than Twain. To read him is

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1. Stephen Leacock, The Complete Works of O.Henry, page 1340
2. Fred Lewis Pattee, The Development of the American Short-Story, page 364

almost to feel his literary presence...Cartoons and caricatures abound."

Thomas Uzzell:[1] "Compression"(crowding too much into a few words) is a false ideal.... Reversal or Opposite attitudes or character traits revealed at the end is a fault because no character revealing may be done after that point. All such trick stories can never aspire to lofty place of honor held by narratives truly and powerfully dramatic. They present a point of view of life by highly artificial means, and at the worst, they are jokes made tolerable by the sheer hilarity with which they are expanded. Because of this fact, we witness the vanishing vogue of most of O.Henry's writing."

One must take the bitter with the sweet. There is no denying the faults that are present in the works of O.Henry, but the statements or phrases,"jokes"..."Sheer hilarity", are complimentary, for they prove that O.Henry has accomplished his purpose, since he has done what he set out to do.

Van Dorens(Carl and Mark)[2]:"Jimmy Valentine was a good job of its kind..it is the man's reformation, his newly acquired tenderness of heart that is his undoing. He(O.Henry) deliberately spoiled it by one sentimental touch at the end."

The illustration explains and justifies the Van Doren criticism.

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1. T.H. Uzzell, Narrative Technique page 244
2. Van Dorens(Carl and Mark) American and British Literature, page 242

The following critics and authorities, Carrol Lewis Maxcy,[2] Thomas H. Uzzell,[1] Clayton Hamilton,[3] Blanche Colton Williams,[4] Fred Lewis Pattee,[5] and Edith Mirrilies,[6] have advanced certain well-founded theories on the technique of characterization for successful narration. Their ideas have been correlated in the chart which follows. By these standards the technique of the work of short-story writers may be evaluated with a fair degree of comprehensiveness:

Essential objectives for effective characterization:

Characters should be entertaining and interesting to a wide variety of readers through emotional appeal.

They should combine individual with typical traits.

Characters should harmonize properly with setting and plot.

Characters should represent actuality as nearly as possible with a fidelity to life-in-the-large.

For the sake of clearness the writer should:

1. Delineate clearly to avoid mistaken personality.
2. Present sufficient details.
3. Emphasize and de-emphasize properly.
4. Voice only thoughts consistent with character.
5. Choose his characters from the lives of people he actually knows best.

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1. T.H. Uzzell, Narrative Technique, pages,63,[illegible]-117,[illegible]4.
2. C.L. Maxcy,The Rhetorical Principles of Narration,Ch. V
3. C. Hamilton, A Manual of the Art of Fiction, Ch.V,pp.77
4. B.C. Williams, A Handbook on Story-Writing, Ch.X,pp.169
5. F.L. Pattee,The Development of the Amer. Short-Story,Ch
6. E. Mirrilies, Writing the Short-Story, Ch. VI, pp. 121

For the sake of unity the writer should:

6. Narrate through a central character or from any single point of view consistent with his story.

7. Be as objective as possible(O.Henry's excepted)

8. Incline toward the use of the indirect method or a combination of direct and indirect method.

For the sake of coherence the writer should:

9. Strive for orderly exposition for character revelation.

10. Harmonize carefully, nomenclature, words, actions, and incident with the personality of his characters.

O.Henry's technique, measured by the standards set forth in the preceding chart, is not found wanting in many respects. His technique is a valid contribution to the literary art, for one reason, because of the fact that it is contributory to the effectiveness of his work. Millions of chuckling readers will vouch for his effectiveness. Wherever he is found wanting, one must pause to remember that never was it necessary for genius to conform to any set qualifications.

He sacrificed plausibility, truth, and broke the illusion of reality in most of his portrayals. One noteworthy violation of truth is seen in his allowing a Negro to kill a White man in Tennessee-- and allowing him to get away with it.(See a "A Municipal Report"[1]). There are numerous exaggerations and inconsistences; each could be illustrated through a number of

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1. Strictly Business

his stories, but the fact remains: he set out to entertain, and he accomplished his purpose. His technique is comparatively unique and thus it may ever remain, for the writers that are or the writers that will be would hardly stoop to the lower levels to seek the charm of carelessness in O.Henry. Such features are a part of his work and are hardly apt to be successfully emulated.

CHARACTERIZATION IN O.HENRY

Comprehensive Abstract

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Comprehensive Abstract

The technique analysis of characterization in O.Henry reveals an original method of character delineation which is an important factor contributing largely to the author's literary success.

Through an examination of his selection of characters, through the detailed analysis of his method of character portrayal, and through the evaluation of the opinions of authoritative critics, there is revealed a lack of conventional conformity which makes the O.Henry technique appear unique in many respects.

This examination of delineation technique would not be complete without a comparison of the methods employed by other masters of the short-story. Comparative analysis and criticism of the technique of characterization in this manner may necessarily prove instructive, especially to the apprentice writer.

O.Henry's characters are derived from two main sources: his own life experiences and his reading, although evidence points rather conclusively to the fact that he did very little reading other than numerous "dime-novels" and The Arabian Nights. He lived for a while in Greensboro, North Carolina (his birthplace), Texas, New Orleans, South and Central America, and finally in New York City. The characters in his stories are

autobiographical figures representing either O.Henry himself or persons whom he had observed from life in various localities where he had lived. Comparatively few of his stories involve characters not taken from his own life or from stories told to him by others during his wanderings; the few which differ in this respect contain actors representing foreign or strange influences evolving from the author's early reading.

Nearly all of his characters are personages of the lower classes of society. His exaltation and romanticizing of the proletariat is unique even though it is representative of the real spirit of American democracy.

The final statement in the preceding paragraph introduces the explanation of what O.Henry did with his commonplace characters. He made them interesting to a wide range of types of readers. Through his own manner of character portrayal he has given to literature personages capable of entertaining, thereby achieving a major objective in the field of short-story writing.

In spite of the fact that his characters are all either types or caricatures, they have been proved worthwhile entertainers by a mighty host of readers of all ages and inclinations. This is furthur evidence of the uniqueness of his method. An analysis of the technique by which he creates such interest in the actors of his little dramas reveals how he does it:

O.Henry made use of both the direct and the indirect mehtods of character delineation. In his earliest successes (after 1900)

the direct method prevails, but in his brief--though extremely productive--period of power(in New York City, 1904-1910) he skilfully combined the use of the indirect and the direct methods of character portrayal. Most of his stories are told in the first person and are extremely subjective. This should seem to indicate a lack of professional craftsmanship or an incapicity to utilize any other than the more elementary, less artistic direct method based on delineation by the author's exposition, description, psychological analysis or reporting through his other characters. But here again there is something very much akin to artistry in the technique of O.Henry. He combines the clarity of the direct method in first describing his characters carefully; then, by means of gradual portrayal, the personality of the individual unfolds very objectively through the character's own speech and actions or through the effect on other characters, or by means of environmental influences.

O.Henry employed four rather mechanical devices repeatedly in his charater portrayal. They are: (1) Surprise Reversal of Characteristics, (2) Recognition, (3) Reversal of Attitudes and Intentions, and (4) Conventional Progression.

The Surprise Reversal device is that method by which the author delineates his character gradually, using both the direct and the indirect method of delineation to reveal typical traits in order to give the impression of a definite type. The delineation is "climaxed" and concluded almost simultaneously,

with the revelation that the carefully built-up type is just the opposite of that which he has led the reader to expect.

The Recognition device also appears quite often. It is comparatively simple, and often too obvious, as in such stories as "Thimble, Thimble"[1], where the old Negro servant is perplexed with the problem of determining which one of the two young gentlemen before him is a Southerner. Delineation is simplified by the introduction of a fourth person who proceeds to place character traits on parade by means of conversation, for the enlightment of the old servant.

Reversal of Attitudes or Intentions is that delineation device whereby a character continually strives to give the impression, through conversation, that he is of a certain type, but proves to be just the opposite, or appears to have inclinations directly contradictory. This may best be illustrated by the reverend old Southern gentleman who insists that he is not hungry and that he does not care to stay for dinner, but who politely takes the first seat at the table where he stows away enough food for six.

Conventional Progression is that device by the use of which O.Henry proves that he, like any other author, could never be entirely original. Occasionally he portrays his characters by the methods which are rather conventional and customary. The characters are revealed "just-as-would-be-expected": the girl in the bad environment meets with disaster;[2] or the criminal lives

1. Options 2."The Guilty Party", The Trimmed Lamp

happily ever after with his dream-girl, having first reformed completely.[1]

There are two groups of stories wherein the delineation methods differ to the extent that they may not be included among the four general devices already mentioned: The first of these involves O.Henry's caricatures. (He created caricatures as well as types). The cartoonist-inclinations of the author lead him to exaggeration, most often in an extremely humorous vein, through the characters of this group of stories. The actors move about in "tall-tales" so closely akin to actuality that the reader almost forces himself to believe the impossible. For example, no single person ever could be as clever, naive, care-free, soft-hearted, happy-go-lucky, and resourceful as the gloriously fraudulent Mr. Jefferson Peters [2].

The group of stories for final consideration involves character delineation in anecdote-like sections grouped in a manner nearly to resemble the grouping of chapters in a novel. However, there is no real character development. There is only revelation of character, even in the not-so-prominent central figure where the portrayal is rather more of a Character-Continuation. In addition, sections of this group of stories, Cabbages and Kings, depict the traits of the natives of South and Central America in the usually democratic O.Henry manner.

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1. "A Retrieved Reformation", Roads of Destiny
2. The Gentle Grafter

In spite of the fact that O.Henry is present in most of his work, the characters reveal themselves through their speech and their actions. In many cases, the most interesting feature in his stories is actually the very presence of the author. In this respect, as in others, his technique is unique, for no one may hope to duplicate a personality; no two persons were ever exactly alike.

In comparison with other writers' methods, the O.Henry technique of delineation may appear inferior in many respects, but only the combined work of several short-story masters could include the many features of his technique: He has all the power of pathos("sentimentality" it might be called by some critics) and depth of understanding to be found in the work of James M. Barrie; the artistic authentic mastery of nomenclature technique and the vernacular as in Ring Lardner or Sherwood Anderson; or the quiet impressiveness of persons as delineated by Bret Harte. Add to this the gradual portrayal leading to a sudden, unexpected last-line reversal of characteristics of a Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and the result would approximate O. Henry. It would, perhaps, require a larger group of the masters whose works could ennumerate the many O.Henry weakness which are, principally: character-twisting, violation of truth, plausibility, reality, and the illusory objective; artificiality, subjectivity, and the lack of universality.

It must be noted, however, that many of the features ordi-

narily listed by critics as faults are the very things which create interest in O.Henry portrayals. His Thackeray-like attitude toward his characters, his grammatical errors, his types and caricatures--all add a distinct O.Henry charm, if nothing else, instead of detracting from the artistry of his work.

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